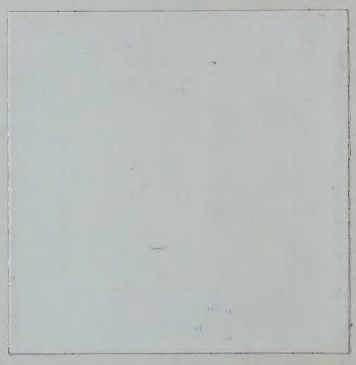
MASTER DRAUGHTSMAN SERIES

the drawings of Kaethe Kollwitz

INTRODUCTION BY
STEPHEN LONGSTREET



DATE DUE

APR 1 1 2002
APR 0 2 2002
NOV 2 2 20
DEC 1 8 2004
DEC 1 6 2004

NOV 0 5 2002
DEC 1 3 2003

AUG 2 0 2005

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.

OCT 1 3 RECD FEB 2 3 1999
FEB 0 8 1999
NOV 0 6 RECD FEB 0 9 1999
MAR 1 7 2000

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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Kollwitz, Kaethe, 1867-1945

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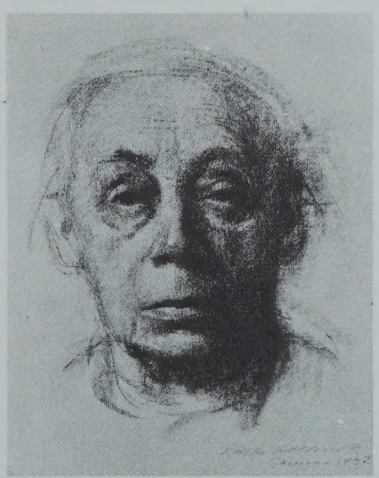

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FIRST EDITION

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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KAETHE KOLLWITZ

1867-1945

The work of Kaethe Kollwitz reflects the ordeal and pain of the humble and the simple . . . The virile heart of this woman has looked on them and taken them into her motherly arms in a solemn and tender compassion. She is the voice of the silent, of the sacrificed . . . ROMAIN ROLLAND

THERE ARE AS YET few great women painters, and almost no female draftsmen to equal the work of the male graphic artists. When one thinks of the work of Angelica Kaufmann, Vigee Lebun, Rosa Bonheur, we think of dated workers in the old styles. In modern times there is Berthe Morisot, Suzanne Valadon (of whom Degas proudly said as he looked at her drawings, "*You* are one of us.") And there is—alone with no disciples—Kaethe Kollwitz. She stands solitary, aside, in modern art, a graphic artist devoted only to drawing, usually in black and white, transposing at times her pencil, chalk and pen and ink images into etchings, woodcuts and lithograph prints, but mainly we are aware of her direct black marks on white paper.

She was born Kaethe Schmidt, on July 8, 1867, in Koenigsberg, in stiff and formal East Prussia; her grandfather was a rebel Lutheran pastor, her father a radical Social-Democrat. No artist was more formed by her forefathers' ideas, for she inhaled with her early life the desire to see man's sordid patterns portrayed and social justice done. Her work is limited to these two themes, and in the latter mostly to her stiff awkward figures, her big-eyed hungry children; all posters of protest against injustice, texts of man's cruelty to man.

She studied art with bland teachers and at sixteen had already found her subject matter. These early drawings are like her last ones; protests against man-made evil, the torment of the down-trodden in a Germany that would in the end become the great beast of modern times. She soon gave up painting; she felt she lacked a color sense, a feel for oil paint, and that what she had to say was best told in black and white. Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier inspired her, but she never attempted their fuller range. In 1890 she married Dr. Karl Kollwitz, who settled with his wife in the slums of Berlin at 25 Weissenburgerstrasse, where she was to live until the house was destroyed in World War II, and with it much of her work.

She had two sons, one of whom was killed early in 1914, as a German soldier. In despair she went on drawing the poor, the rejected, the broken, the defeated and the war-wrecked. Impressed by a play of Gerhart Hauptmann's about the plight of cloth weavers, she spent five years drawing a series of six etchings on the subject. Shown in the great exhibition at the Lehrter Bahnhof (railroad station) in Berlin, in 1898, such interest was aroused it was decided to give her a gold medal for the *Weavers*. But Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered no honors for her, calling her work "*Rinnstein Kunst*", gutter art. However the Berlin Kupferstichkabinet Museum did acquire a set of the work.

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She was a small woman, not pretty; gray, serious, big-eyed, awed with tragic wonder of what she drew. She was a master of line, of tonal values, and her least drawing shows the touch of her special genius. The death of her first son in battle made her burden of living only heavier. sadder; her tragic mothers and children, her special theme, grew stronger and more despairing in her drawings.

She was for the special few. There was no joy of life in her work, no gush of gay color, no theme of man enjoying life, no setting of nature green and lush or suggesting any garden of Eve. She saw no landscape but barbed wire and factory chimney, soiled slum walls, deserts of bricks and rubble. She shows no religious longing, no pleasure in existing. The blind, the sick, the hungry and the tortured are her only material. And herself. Always she faced her mirror.

She was fifty before the world paid much attention to her as an artist. Her range was limited, her view obsessed. Her work could have been morbid, self-destructive, too much that of introspective brooding; it is saved only by the magnificence of her drawing. Even her best work is not free of pathos and sentimentality. Yet she avoided an easy facility, the superficial sterility of much modern drawing. Seen as a life's work, the same theme is repeated, always the poor, the hungry, the broken and exploited. Never any sunshine, any pleasures. Always the tragic mothers and their sickly children, always huddling to protect their young, wary, awaiting some expected blow. There is never the enjoyment of producing a full life.

And, as an always present subject, all through a long life of over fifty years of work, the picture of her own drawn hurt face, her own Slavic features growing older, more lined, the skull thrusting through the skin, until near the end almost all we have left is the image, almost a ghost, of a bent old woman reaching for a hand she labels *The Call of Death.*

By 1933 she knew the power-mad bestial Germans would ostracize her. "I expected people to come, at least to write. There was only silence around me." She gave up her professorship in the Prussian Academy of Art. Her husband died. Her work was labeled *Degenerate,* galleries and exhibits were forbidden her. Alone, she worked on. The Gestapo came, and for a time she expected to be taken to a concentration camp, A grandson was killed in Russia with the invading army. Berlin became dangerous because of the American bombings. She took refuge near Dresden. And there on April 22, 1945, she died. Her last enigmatic words were: "My greetings to all."

Her drawings remain grim evidence of her nation's (and *all* nations at times) fall from human respect into degenerate lusts. They are skilled and powerful graphic forms. They remind us of the words of the philosopher Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it..."

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Publisher's Note:

The publishers wish to particularly thank Mr. Hermann-Hinrich Reemstma of Hamburg, Germany, for his generosity in allowing them to reproduce drawings from his collection, many of which are being printed here for the first time.

Portrait of a Young Man

Black crayon

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Old Man Eating

Black crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Mother and Child

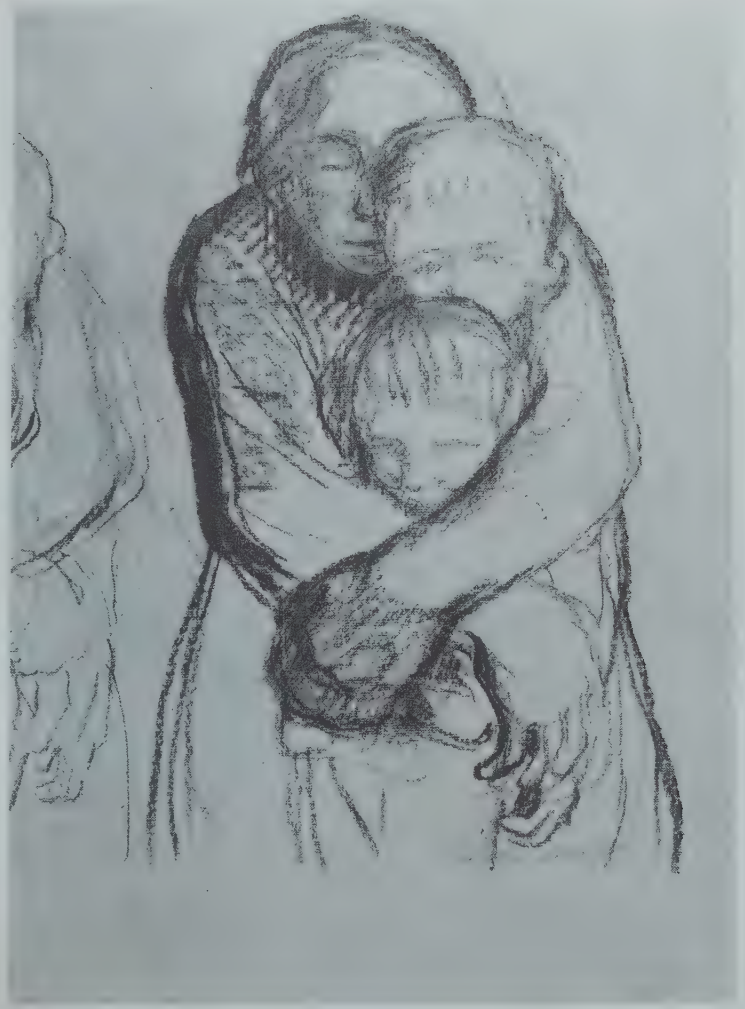
Black crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

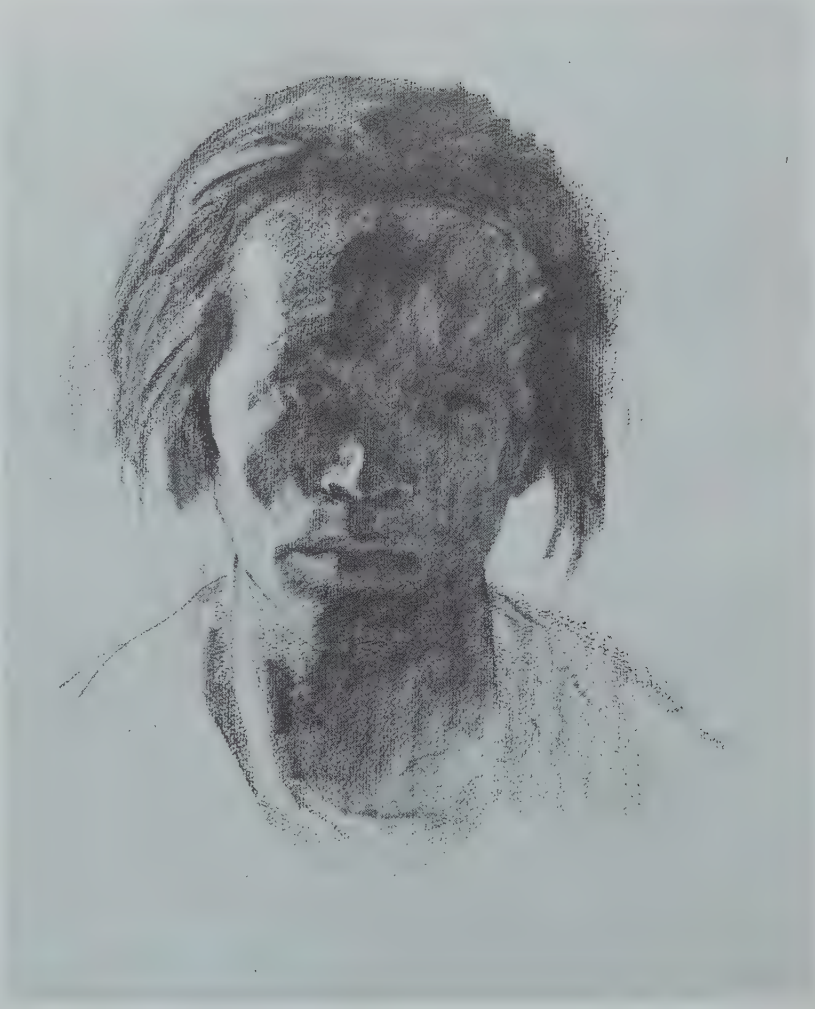
Mother and Child

Black crayon

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION



The Mother
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Head Study
Charcoal
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Nude Studies

Charcoal

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Figure Study
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Mother Feeding Child
Wash
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Two Head Studies

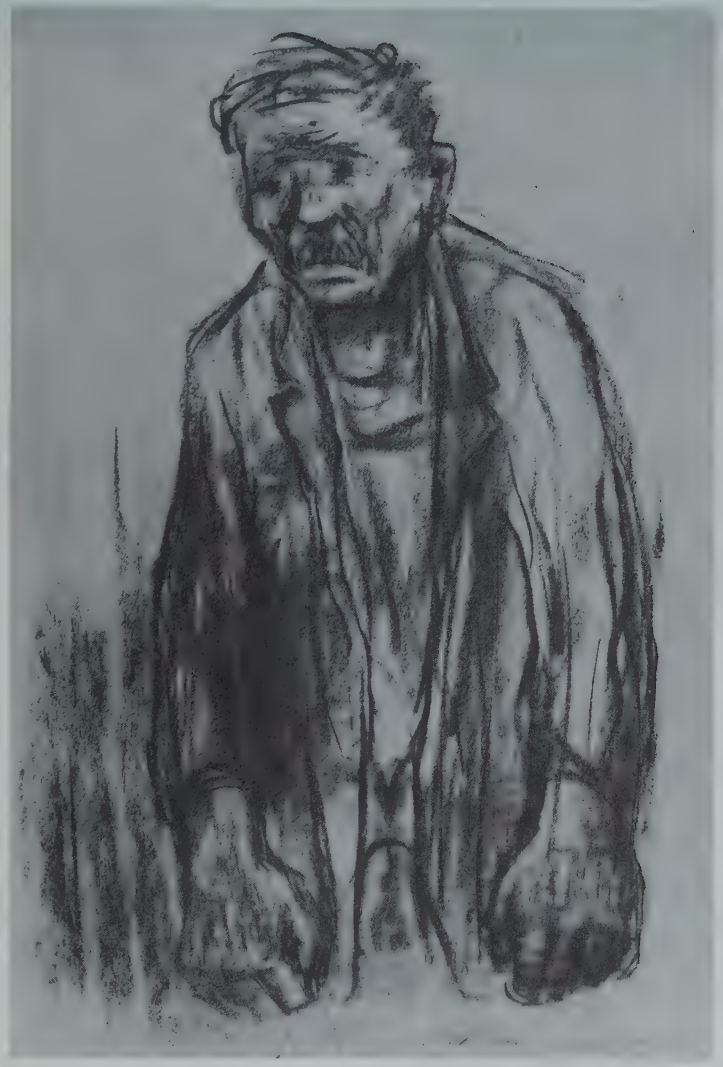
Charcoal

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Mother with Small Child

Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Old Man

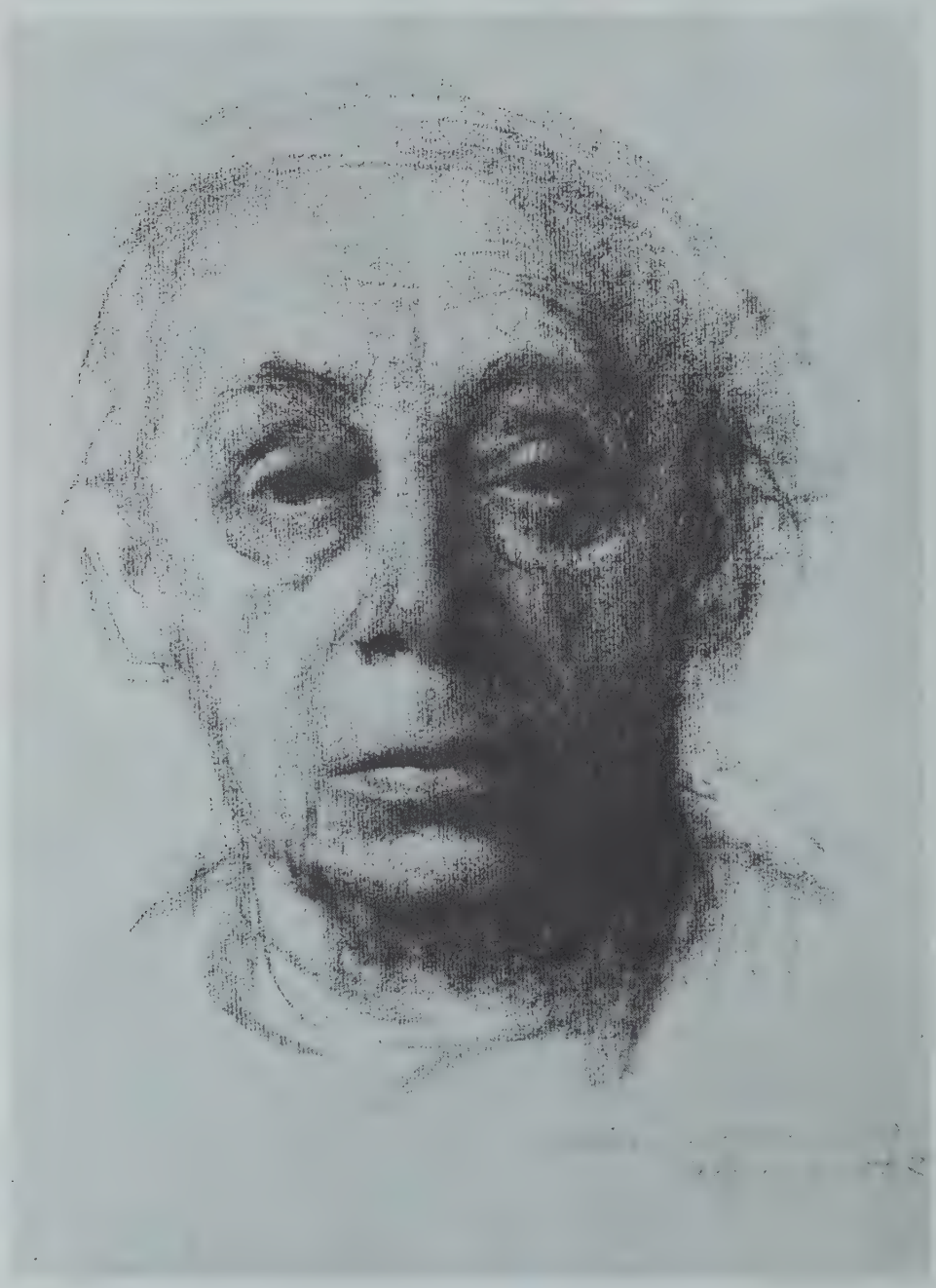
Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Old Woman

Black crayon and wash

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Self Portrait of Artist

Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Old Woman

Charcoal

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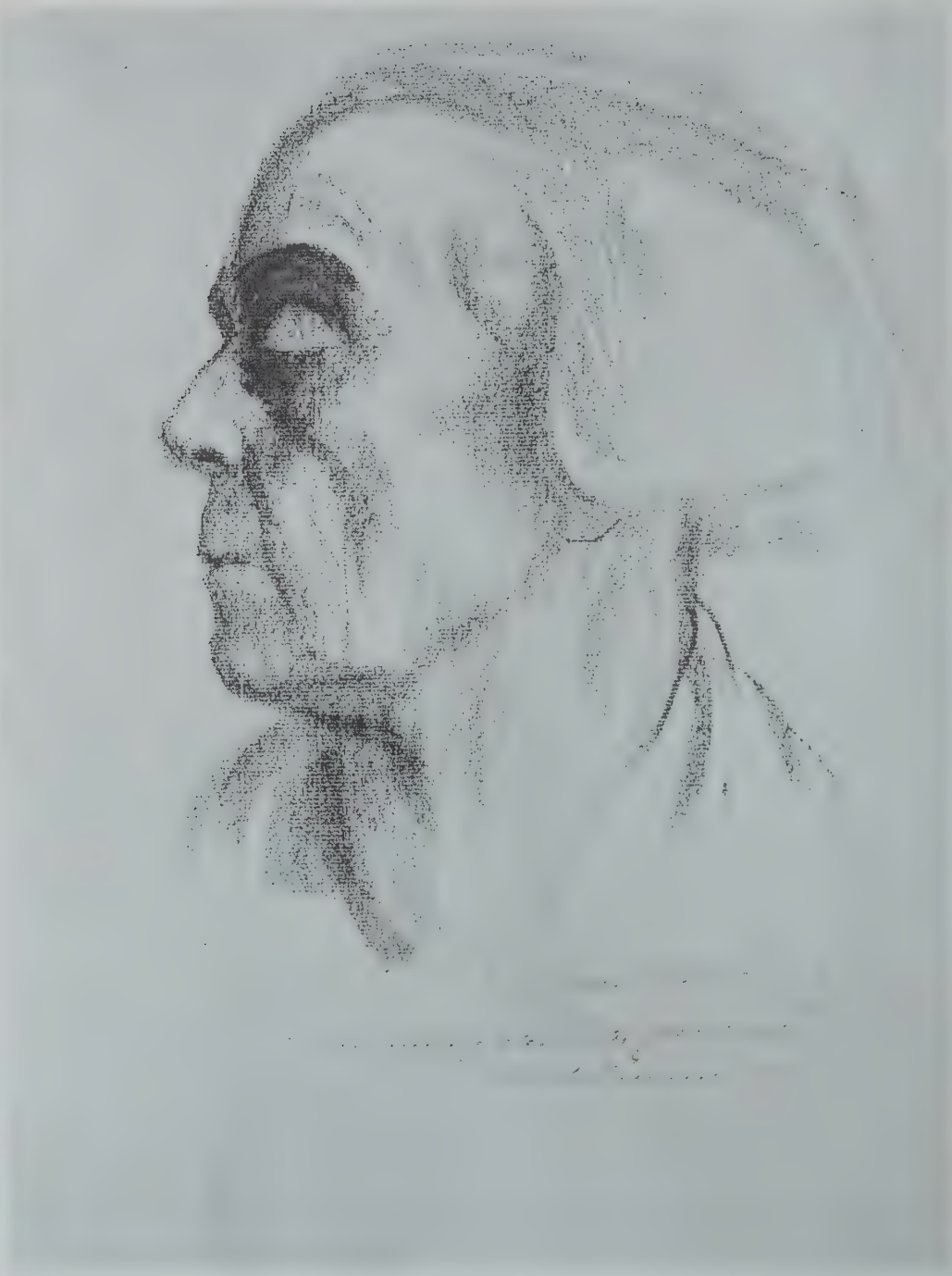

Wilhelmine Mohr

Charcoal

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Husband and Wife

Black crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

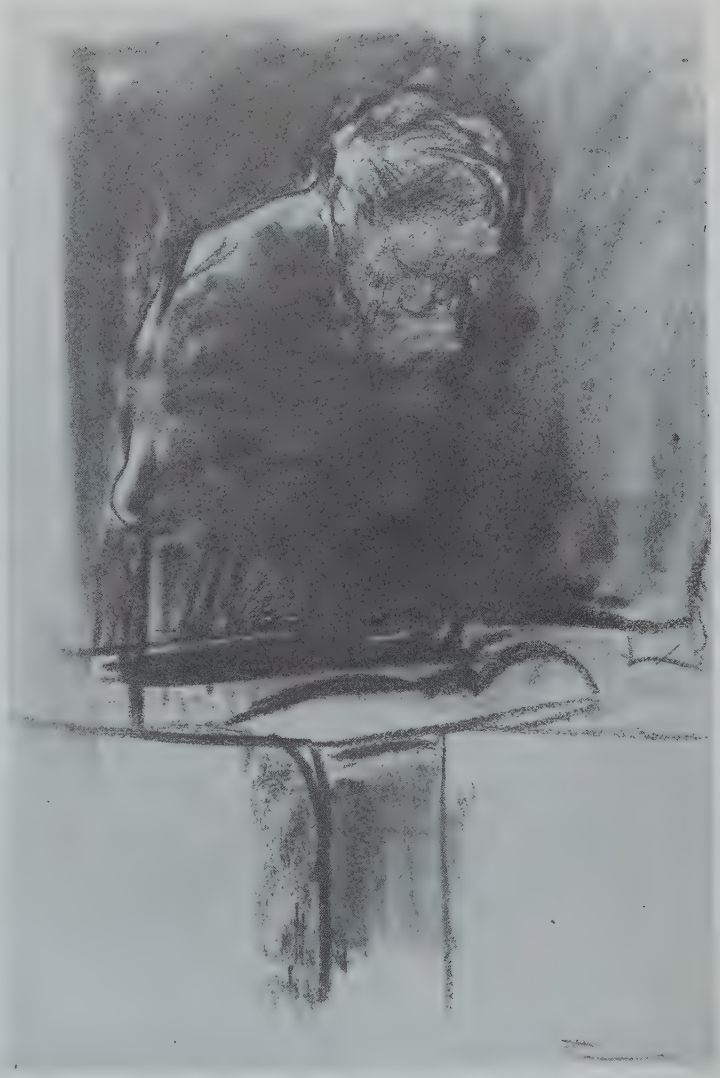
Maria and Elizabeth

Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Dance Around the Guillotine
Black crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Old Woman
Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Old Woman

Black crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Mother Rocking Baby

Pen and ink

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

The Survivors

Charcoal

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Self Portrait of Artist with Pencil

Charcoal

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Mother with Sleeping Child
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Sleeping Child
Charcoal
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Worker Resting

Black crayon

HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Standing Woman

Charcoal

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Head Study

Charcoal

HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Figure Study
Charcoal

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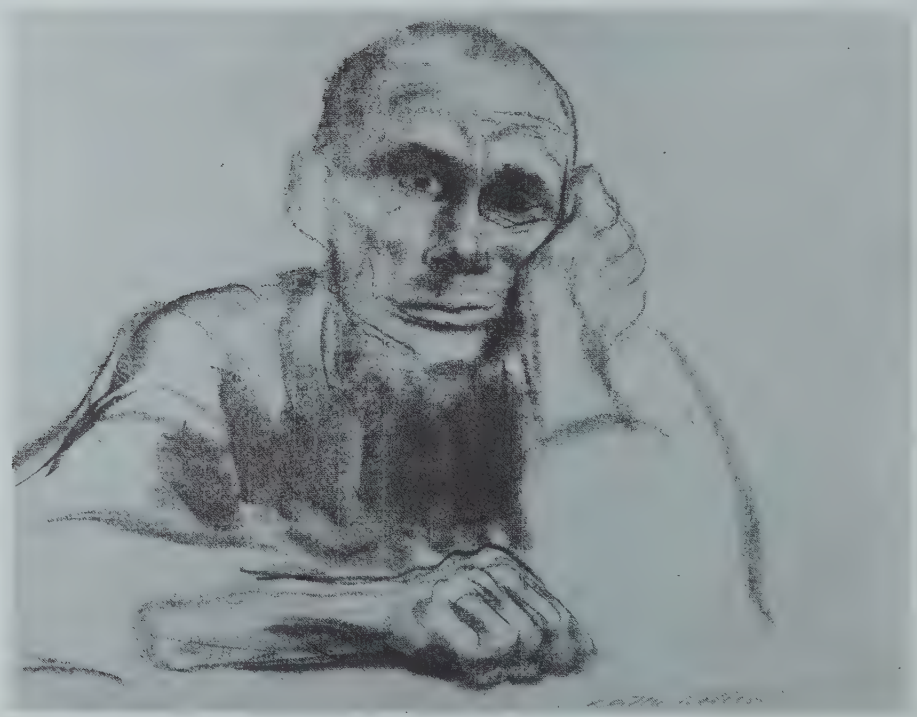
ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Nude Study
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Head Study
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Page of Hands

Crayon

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Bust of a Woman

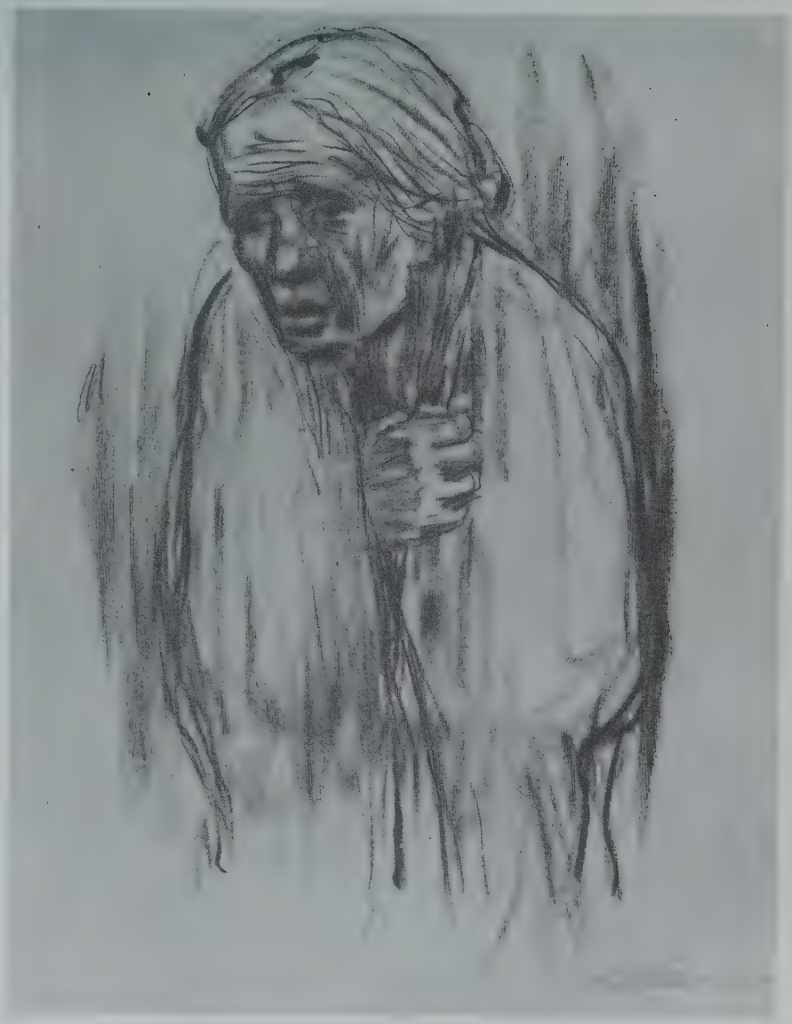
Crayon, heightened with white

COURTESY OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The Welcome Home

Black crayon

HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Old Woman

Charcoal

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Figure of a Young Girl

Pencil

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
BLANCHE ADLER FUND

Seated Woman
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

A Tragedy
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Heads and Hands of a Working Man
Charcoal

Head Study

Charcoal

HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

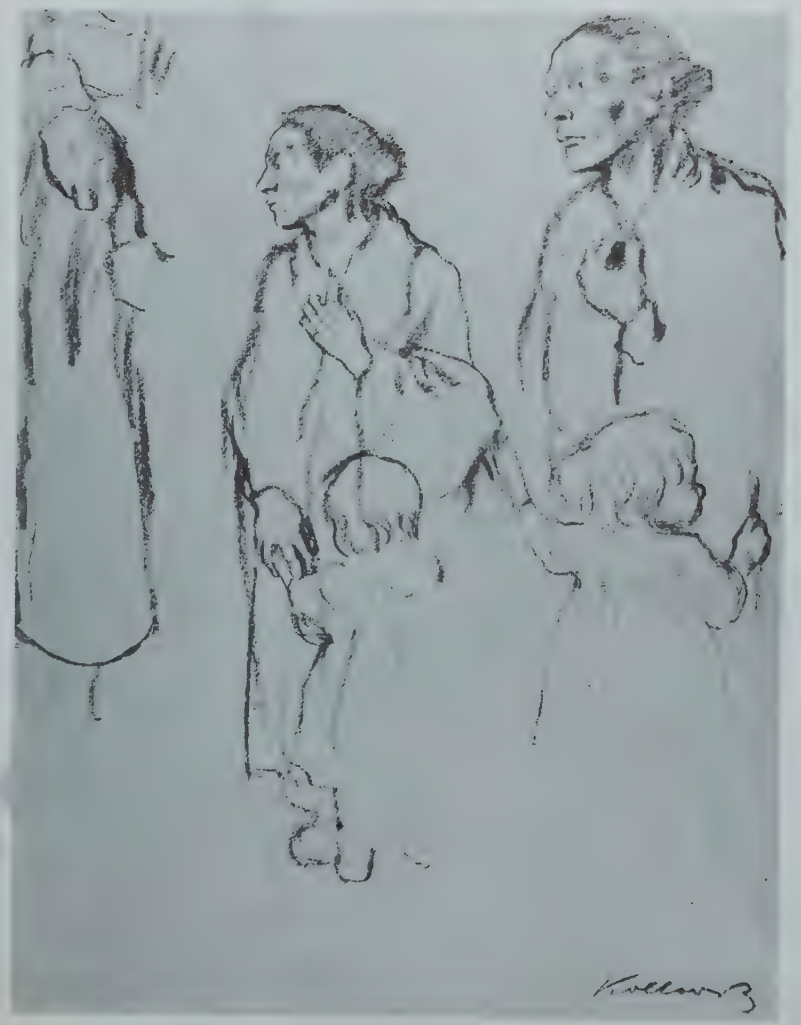
Waiting Child
Charcoal

Hand Studies
Pen and ink and wash

Study for "Heimarbeit"

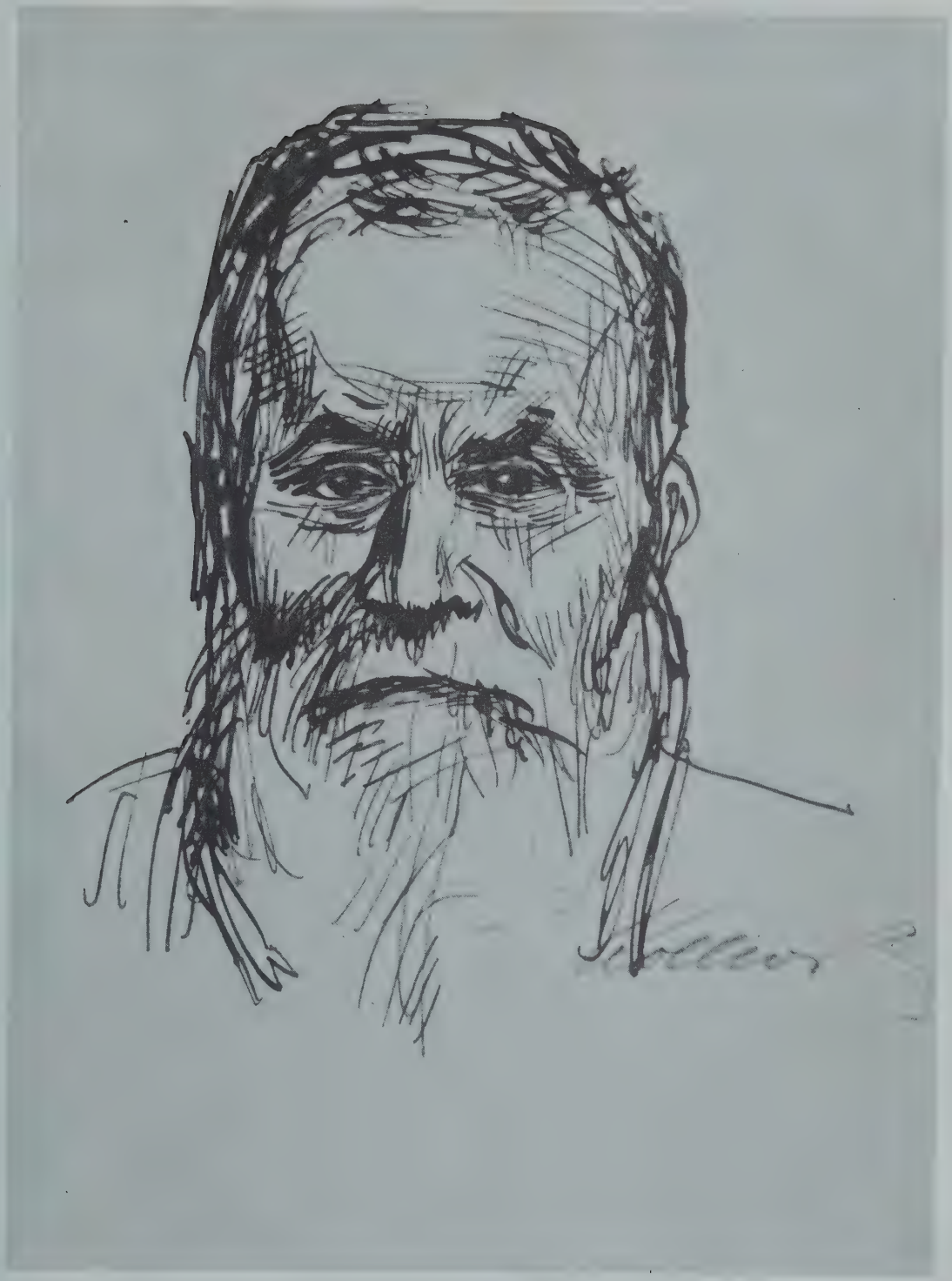
Pen and ink and chalk

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY



Waiting Mothers and Children
Charcoal

Study of Woman
Charcoal



Jean Jaures

Pen and ink

REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Head Study

Black crayon

STAATLICHE KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN, DRESDEN, GERMANY

Head Study
Black chalk
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Nude Study
Charcoal
REEMTSMA COLLECTION, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Study of a Man

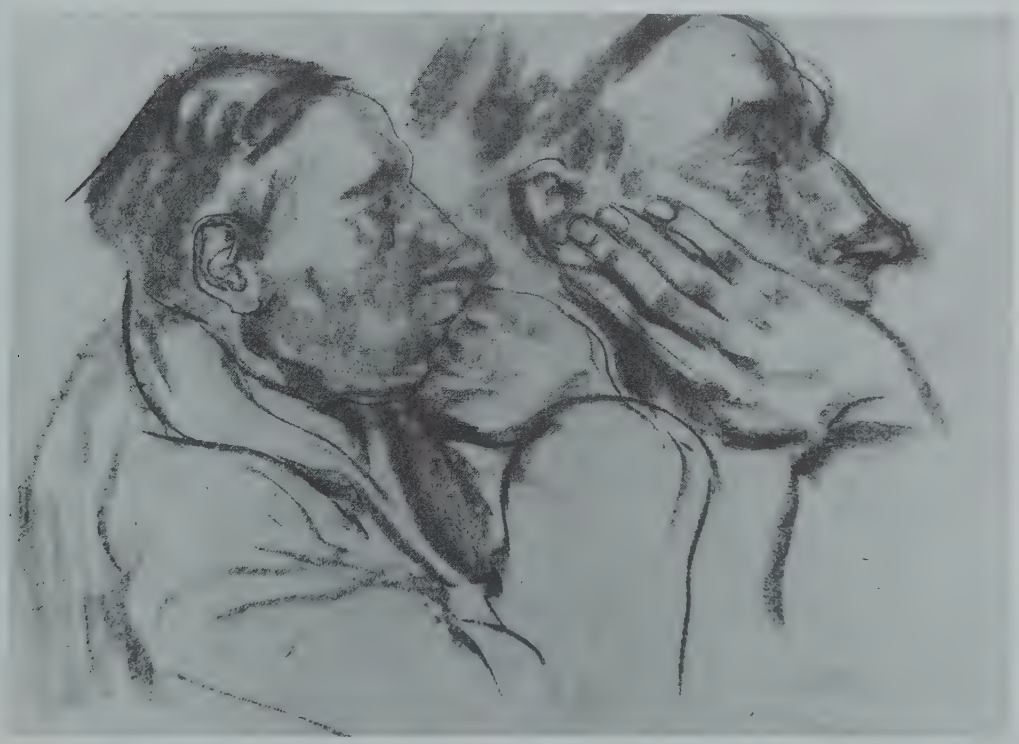
Pen and ink

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Study of Child

Charcoal

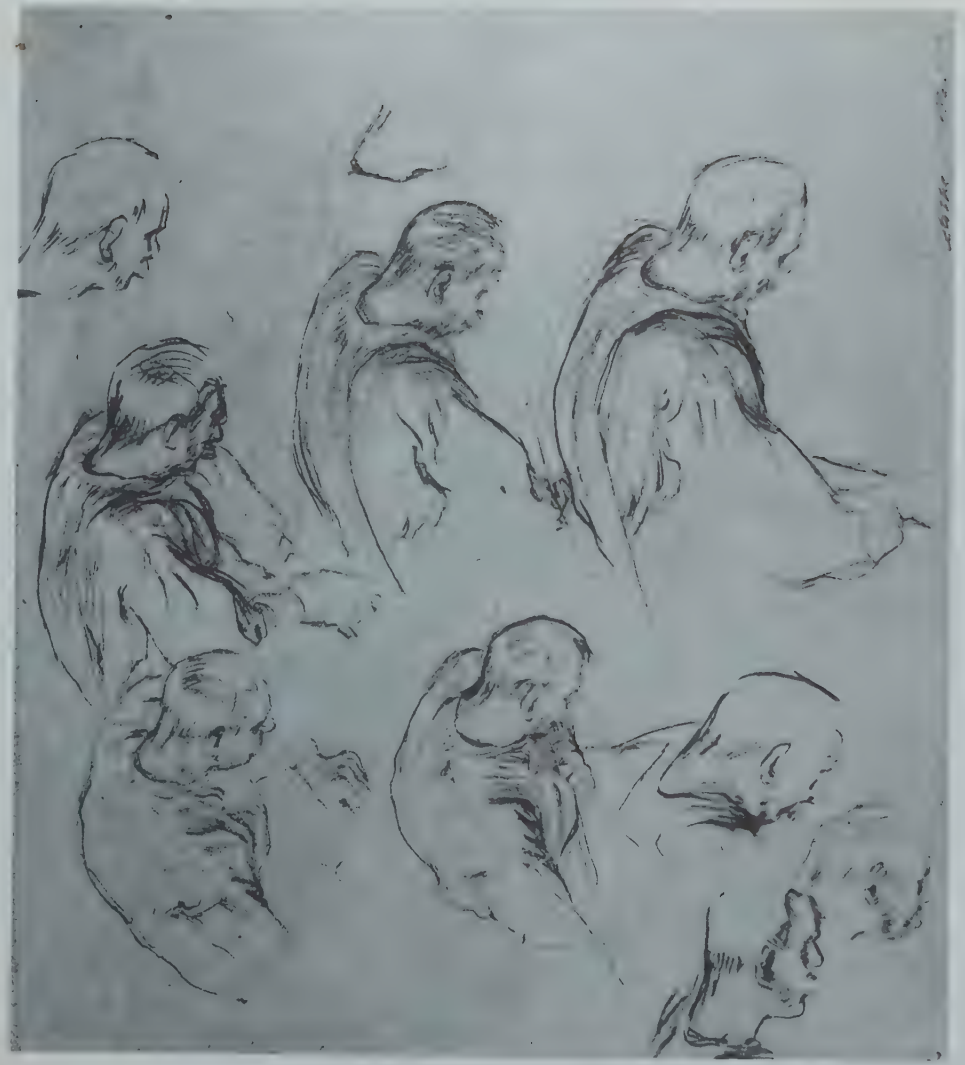
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY



Study of Man

Black chalk

ERDMANN COLLECTION, COLOGNE, GERMANY



Page of Sketches
Pen and ink

Mother and Two Children
Charcoal and wash

Four People Seated on Beach

Pencil

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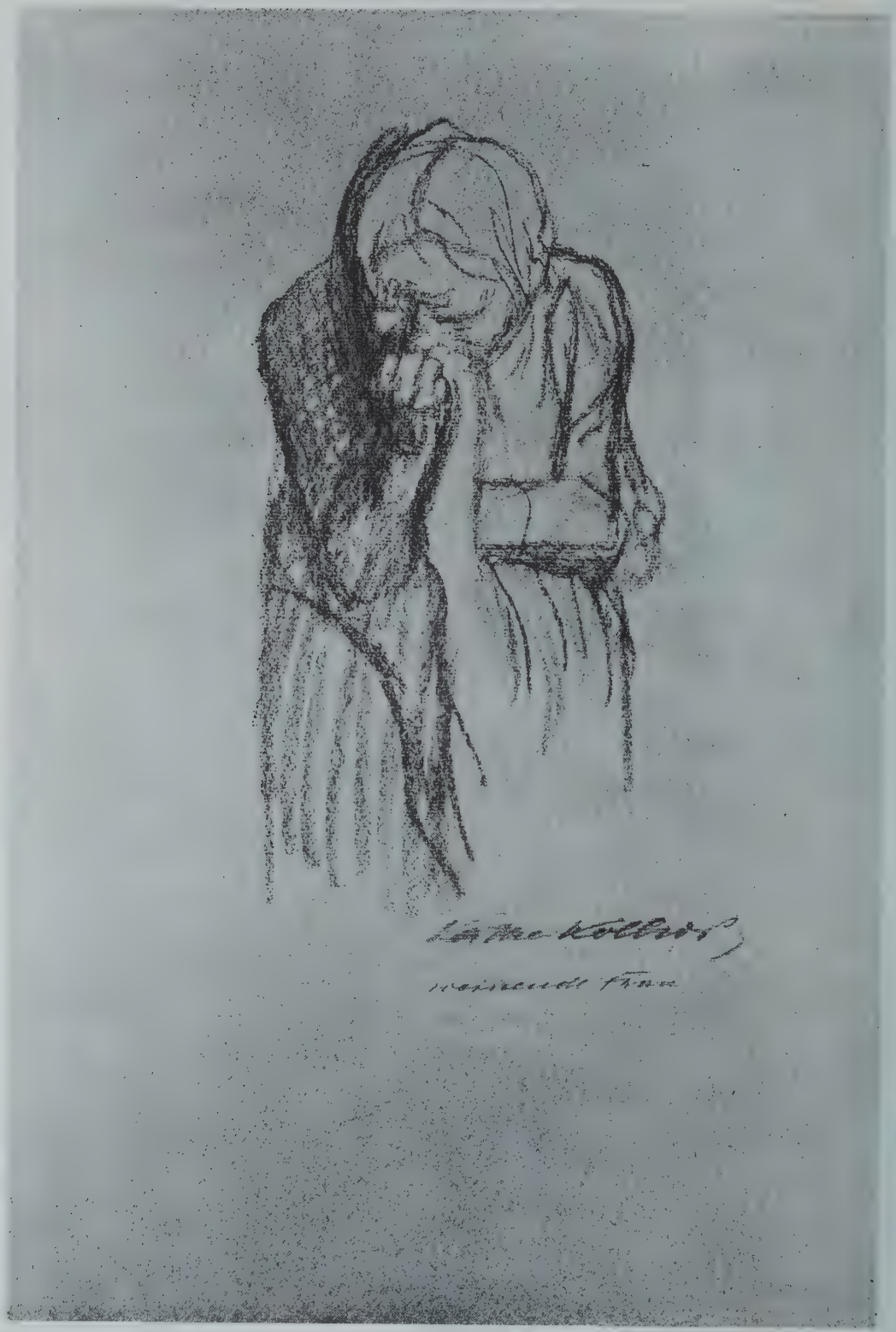


Woman Weeping

Charcoal

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C., ROSENWALD COLLECTION

Three Studies of Man
Pencil
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Figure Study
Charcoal
HAMBURGER KUNSTALLE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Study of Man

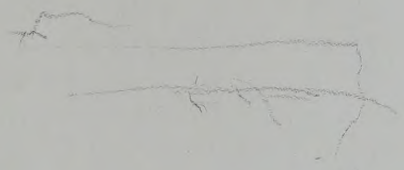
Charcoal

ERDMANN COLLECTION, COLOGNE, GERMANY

Figure Sketch

Chalk

ERDMANN COLLECTION, COLOGNE, GERMANY



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